

614 /1/ Cancuc is a Tzeltal town of Chiapas, Mexico, whose
[101] social organization is based on exogamous patrilineal clans.
[776] These clans are intimately related to: 1) the nagual or guardian
[551] spirit, which is given the name of lab among the Indians of this
[613] region; 2) the native surnames that constitute the lineages within
[621] the clans; 3) the "barrios," as the Spanish chroniclers called the
endogamous tribal subdivisions (called calpulli among the Aztecs
and culibal in Cancuc); 4) the kinship system; and 5) the be-
havior.

614 All the individuals belonging to a clan consider themselves
601 "legitimate siblings" /Sp. "hermanos legítimos"/, using the
terms that designate this class of relatives. This theoretical con-
sanguineous kinship is expressed by means of the word chapomal --
a Cancuquero /a person from Cancuc/ calls another "brother" be-
614 cause he is his chapomal. This form of usage is indicative of
601 common ancestry, something that we were not able to clarify, as
124 our questions on this point only received answers that showed that
829 they had lost any notion of a real or mythical ancestor. Our in-
formants invariably explained this situation with the expressions:
"it is the custom," "San Juan /Saint John/ (Patron Saint of Cancuc)
ordered it so," or "it was ordered by Manuel (God)." What does
constitute a clear concept in the minds of all is that "formerly" each
clan lived in a cave, from which its members went out in the
form of human beings to populate the earth and in which lived
the naguales, or lab, that bound them to their place of origin.
• [775] The soul came back to this cave after death. There are as many
caves as the number of clans.

614 The children belonged to the paternal clan. A woman who
marries does not become a member of the clan of her husband.

/2/ Exogamy is strictly respected; persons belonging to the
same clan never marry each other.

[591] The clans are not local, as their members live in all of the
places and rancherías.

[178] At present the clans lack chiefs, this institution having dis-
[669] appeared about 30 years ago, according to all our information,
when the zone that we are studying underwent a chaotic period
due to political revolts.

753 thunder, wind, or lightning. All the men
 776 who occupy or have occupied cargos in the
 [794] political or religious organization are sup-
 [888] posed to have a nagual, as do the older
 [613] members of the lineage. They consider it
 their duty to punish those members of the
 group who have sinned and use their na-
 gual, who can devour the soul of the victim
 little by little.

774 According to this idea, everybody has two
 776 souls: one which can be eaten by the na-
 guals, and one which follows the destiny
 that its patron saint has planned for it.
 761 When death comes, the naguales take away
 775 the first soul and have a banquet up in the
 776 mountains. In this feast, the naguales of the
 old people of the clan participate, joined by
 others induced to comradeship.

761 It is a widespread belief that at midyear
 773 the naguales go to a place in heaven called
 776 Atimaltik, where an old man who possesses
 the Book of Life lives. Since in this book he
 keeps account of the ~~time~~ ^{year} each person can
 live, it is a source of information for the na-
 guals, who thus can know who is close to
 death. When the signature of a person dis-
 appears from the book, this means that the
 person died.

764 People have to keep watch over the body
 for two days and two nights. It is placed on
 a wooden plank in the middle of the house
 after being washed or just given a change
 of clothes. Two candles are placed at the
 head. At night friends and neighbors come
 to keep company with the family. They play
 harp and guitar and drink chicha and
 aguardiente. At dawn, the men go home
 and the women remain crying near the
 corpse.

[613] Following the ancient custom, the dead
 are buried near the graves of other men of
 [184] the same lineage. In Cancuc, however, dead
 are buried inside the house.

The bottom and sides of the grave are
 covered with slabs to form a coffin. The
 corpse, bundled up in a petate, is placed in-
 side. His clothes and other articles he may

[P 224-B]

4: Villa Rojas E-4, 5 (1938-1944) 1969

NV9 Tzeltal NV9

764 tween his hands. The head is always placed to the west. During the following days, prayers are said to the memory of the dead.

[768] Sometimes the house is evacuated because
[775] people are afraid of the soul who remains saying goodbye to friends and relatives.

113

Nash, J., 1959
Paniagua, 1876
Redfield and Villa Rojas, 1939
Roya, 1940
Siverts, 1955, 1960
Slocum, 1956
Starr, F., 1902
Stephens, 1841
Tax, 1937
Tozzer, 1907
Trens, 1942
Villa Rojas, 1946, 1947
Vogt, 1964e

[P. 225-B]

Rituals of Life Crisis

131

The sense of continuity

with the past is preserved in the ceremonials in which these officials act, but nonceremonial activities no longer reinforce the values symbolized in ritual.

182
608
571
796**DEATH AND BURIAL**

When a person dies, his soul is believed to go out from his tongue. The family is responsible for finding a resting place which will be satisfactory to the soul. If the dead person has died of a "good" (not caused by witchcraft) illness, the soul lingers for eight days and then goes to heaven. If the dead person has been killed, his soul stays in the village for "a month or twenty days." The reason given for this is that "the gods did not choose the hour of death, and the soul doesn't know where to go." During this waiting period the dead person "finishes his heart," or ends his emotional ties with friends and relatives.

763
764
775
[593]

Following the death, a sister of the parents of a child or some other adult woman washes the body and puts a wrap over it. The body is always laid out with the feet toward the door; the eyes are shut, and the jaw is wrapped with a kerchief to hold the mouth closed. Two candles are placed at the head and two at the feet. Flowers and a bowl to collect offerings of 2 pesos from each visitor are placed at the head of the body. The contribution given at the burial assures the giver of a hearing with Christ:

764
764
431

Everyone gives a contribution of 50 cents or a peso. Each one considers how much he can give and gives it. God listens to and speaks to those who give gifts. Those who give a candle or a little contribution of corn or flowers give an account of the dead man's life. If he had no crime on his conscience or only one crime, whoever killed him by violence or by witchcraft bears the guilt. Christ listens to the account of those who have given good contributions. Thus the help is given so that Christ will see that he did a favor to one who is poor and who has nothing to bury himself, not corn, or money, or anything to sell, not land, or cattle, or wheat. Therefore everyone who is a relative or a compadre or a neighbor brings one-fourth [bottle of liquor], a half measure of brown sugar, fifteen or twenty corn-cobs and one or two candles. And all men who arrive at the grave and

761 might be. The father or closest male kin of the dead person is careful to
627 recount all the consultations he has had with curers, both to absolve him-
753 self of the guilt of neglect or unconscious witchcraft and to search for the
true culprit.

764 A proper burial with holy water, flowers, grave offerings, and prayers as-
• 775 sures the survivors that the soul of the deceased will rest and his bones
will lie in peace. Lacking any of these features, the dead will disturb the
living, as is recounted below:

*During the revolution, many were buried without a funeral or without
blessed water. On Thursday, the bones burn and cry. You can still see a
blue flame rising above the old graveyard on Thursday. You can find
money that the ancestors left there, but you have to go at night to dig it up.*

An important safeguard to ensure that the soul will lie in peace is burial
among people with whom the deceased lived. When a married adult dies,
[593] he is buried with his dead spouse. If he had two dead spouses, he is buried
[603] with the first spouse on the right hand and the second on the left. A child
[763] is buried with the grandparents of the household in which he lived—that
[593] is, if he lived with his mother's parents he is buried with them, and if
[608] with the father's parents, then with them. When people know that they
[604] are going to die, they express their preference as to where they wish to be
buried. Usually they will elect to be buried between their dead parents, but
if they were unhappy with their parents, they might choose a padrino or
uncle. If dissatisfied in its resting place, a soul, even when properly buried,
cannot find peace and wanders back to the house. Fearing this, relatives
try to comply with the wishes of the dead.

*My grandfather used to say that he wanted to be buried between his
mother and father. But when he was about to die, he said, "I don't want
to be buried there because my father beat me. He will continue beating
my soul. I want to go on the side [of the cemetery]. Please don't bury me
near my parents." My father said, "All right, we will put you on the side."*

764 The funeral must meet the expectations of the community as well as
554 those of the deceased and his relatives. The mature children of a man who
626
593

Rituals of Life Crisis

135

dies are expected to give a funeral appropriate to his station in life and his wealth, as is expressed in the following account:

When my father got sick, he told his wife not to put him in a black box. He had heard a story that when the dead man is in a black box, his spirit cannot see. He wanted to be in a white box. He told this to his brother. But his brother wanted to get a black box. He bought one black box for three hundred pesos when my father died, because it is the custom of the pueblo to bury adults in a black box. The people would talk if we did not buy a good box because they knew he had animals. We spent six hundred pesos for the funeral. We presented the body in church for a mass. We had a singing mass for thirty pesos, and the box cost three hundred pesos. We had a common meal of beef in the house, and we spent two hundred and sixteen pesos for three garrafones of liquor. Each of his sons contributed sixty pesos for that. If we hadn't given him a good funeral, people would have said, "His children are very lax not to buy a good box to bury their father."

The padre says that all bodies should be presented in the church. He says if you don't have money, you don't have to pay for the mass. But we are ashamed if we don't pay because he does work for us. He charged only twenty-five pesos because he said my father worked hard for the town. We took a collection from all the people who were there, and it amounted to one hundred and thirty pesos. We paid the padre for the mass and gave a contribution. All the people in whose houses he had passed when he was alive came to see him. They said, "Ah, his children gave a very nice box for their father."

If all of the family is poor, no one talks if the funeral is not a good one. But if there is anything that can be sold, it will have to be to make a good funeral. When my father died, he had eighteen horses. We had to sell one, and each of the children gave one hundred pesos.

Some say the souls play the harp and drink liquor when they arrive in heaven. On All Soul's Day they visit the village where they had lived and where they are known. For each member of the household who had died, a specific portion of food is laid out. Special likes are catered to: a bottle of liquor will be set on the table for a deceased father, soda pop for children

764
554
626
593
764
554
626
593
433
[22]
[75]

[432]

775
769

756 suitable, the president and judges give permission to the curers to allow
731 him to enter the profession at this time. The novice provides three liters of
liquor which are drunk "in common" by the curers and the civil officials.

174 There is some evidence that, formerly, novice curers were asked to yield
756 the soul of one of their children:

[774] My dead husband was given permission by Julian Gomex, the leader of
the curers of Ahk'olnantik, to enter the curing profession. When my hus-
band told me he wanted to cure, he said that Julian had asked him for a
child "for the ancestors to eat." My husband was going to give a child of
his brother since we didn't have any, but I said it would be a pity. Then
he said he would give trago. This he did. I forget how many liters.

When the contagion came, the curers went to take out the heat. A po-
liceman called my dead husband, and he went. The policeman said the
leading curer had called him. The judges told him, "It is better for you to
enter in common with the other curers."

He began to cure. The curers then asked what offering we were going
to give.

"We have no children," said my husband. "We will give you liquor. I
cannot give my brother's child or my sister's children."

He must have brought them about ten or twelve liters of trago and two
packs of cigarettes.

756 The third soul, swayohel, may be acquired, or one may be born with it.

[775] Those who acquire the third soul by capture of the soul of a dead person
within twenty days after the death are considered to be potentially danger-
ous. They are more likely to use the soul for evil than those who have ac-
quired it from the ancestors at birth. Swayoheles can be acquired from a
saint named ?Ahau in the neighboring town of Oxchuk.¹ The following
756 account illustrates how one asks this saint for a swayohel:
776

If you go to the saint with a black face named ?Ahau with two candles
of twenty cents you can ask for a swayohel. You say, "I want one Fulel that
is very strong. I have an enemy. I need one." You sleep there and wake

[777]
[776] 1. Lombardo Otero (1944:73) says that in Oxchuk, Mukulajau, or Chulajau, is identified
with Trinidad, and is associated with the pigeon, which is the animal spirit of powerful
curers.

Curing and Curers

139

up with a swayohel. One man near San Vicente said his friend went there to ask for one. Next day, the enemy died. One man who went there said when he woke up he was sure he had gained a swayohel. He had dreamed of two animals. "Are they my swayoheles?" he asked. They were jaguars. 756
776

When he got to his house, the same two animals came. They thought about how to get his enemies. But when the jaguars had killed his enemies, they were not content. Then they went on to kill many people. Finally the man was shot. The spirits of all those who die as a result of a swayohel received from Ahau go to him after their death. (775).

Curers are classified as potentially good or dangerous on the basis of what kind of swayohel they have. Good curers have swayoheles of animals which eat leaves or grass—horses, sheep, bulls, or other herbivorous animals. Potentially dangerous curers have the souls of carnivorous animals—vultures, dogs, cats, mountain lions, coyote, and others. They may not use these swayoheles for evil, but possession of such a soul is a basis for suspicion. Usually the curers keep secret the nature of their swayohel, but sometimes when they are drunk they brag about its power. Good swayoheles fly or walk straight down the main roads of the town, while evil swayoheles lurk at the outskirts of the settled area. 756

Only one woman has a swayohel and practices curing. She is reputed to have acquired her swayohel in the following manner: 756
159
562

"There was a woman named Andrea Ca'il and another named Fernanda Ca'il. They were not sisters, but they were of the Ca'ilek. Fernanda died. She was a true elder woman, a very strong woman. She lived in Madronal and Andrea lived in the center.

One day Andrea said, "Let us go collect wood," to two girls.

"Let's go," said the girls. "Where shall we get the wood?"

"Let's go in the woods behind Madronal," replied Andrea. "Let's go."

The women arrived in the mountain to cut wood. When they had the wood, Andrea said she saw a mulberry bush. "Let us eat some berries," she said.

Andrea went to the mulberry bush. She saw a white ball of C'it'ol under the bush. "What kind of an animal is that?" she asked.

The girls looked at it and said, "We don't know."

a88

In the Eyes of the Ancestors

577
682 in the following statement by a man who admitted to me that he had killed two men:

The padre said that those who kill will get killed. The one who kills also receives all the guilt of his victim and will have to pay for it in the after-world. But my father said that when he was a policeman, there was a man in Tejonero who killed for nothing when he got drunk. He always carried a knife and would kill anyone around. However, he lived until he was very old. Therefore I do not believe the padre.

577
775 Concern about the afterworld does not act as a deterrent to action in this world.

783
794 Most men ignore the priest's attempts to persuade them to go to confession. Women, especially the prayer-reciters, confess and take communion. Their confessions, according to the priest, are a recitation of the sins of their husbands or their neighbors.

293
577 Drinking is often given as a defense for failing to meet standards of behavior. While this serves to excuse minor infractions, a man is supposed to be responsible for his actions even when drunk. When one policeman started a fight in public, an elder judge commented to my informant:

Look at that, younger brother! I drink liquor when I am very drunk, but I do not fight either my elders or minors. When I passed as president formerly, I used to enter the cabildo, and I spoke well to the judges even if I was drunk. One time I came to your house very drunk and you were half drunk, but you did not say anything to me, nor did I. You did not fight. Thus I walk well. I never fight, nor have I gone to prison, and it is because I give respect to my elders and to my juniors.

Reflecting on this advice, my informant added:

And so it is with me also. I have drunk a great deal in Ahk'olnantik [the opposite section from where he lives] both at day and at night. Whoever speaks to me tells me to go drink with them a little liquor, and sometimes I give them a drink or I take them where they sell liquor and we drink. But I never fight, and I am able to drink wherever I like.

626
273
431 The community has developed techniques for compensating failure to meet behavioral norms. The most frequently used is an offering of the